



Maryland 4-H Activity Best Practices

The following are suggested policies and procedures to help make your in-person 4-H activity healthy, safe, and accessible. These recommendations are made in addition to the protocols described in the **Restoring Maryland 4-H In-Person Programs Volunteer Guidebook**, and the 4-H activity **Health & Safety and Hygiene & Sanitation Plans**.

Participation & Leadership

- Consider having more than 2 UME/4-H volunteers or 4-H faculty/staff on-site as activity leaders
 - PRO: If one leader must isolate a participant for illness or behavior, or gets sick him/herself, there are two other leaders to carry on the activity with appropriate supervision.
 - CON: More than two leaders reduces the number of youth or others who can participate in the activity.

- Offer ways for families to join the activity virtually as it is happening. This will increase participation without exceeding in-person group size. It will also include those who choose to avoid personal contact or who cannot participate in-person due to health, risk, or other concerns.
 - Use a “buddy system” where a 4-Her who is at the activity in-person directly connects with a 4-Her who is at home using peer-to-peer video chat such as Facetime, Skype, etc.
 - Be sure parents/guardians of both youth agree to this technique ahead of time, to avoid “surprise” overage charges to data plans.
 - Use virtual meeting technologies like Zoom, Skype, Facetime, etc. or livestream to a controlled-access platform, such as a club's private group page on Facebook. **DO NOT** offer a public livestream, for safety and security reasons.
 - Have a designated on-site “tech manager” who monitors access and content if you use one of these technologies.

- If livestreaming or recording a 4-H activity, remember you must have permission from all parties who will be recorded (from a parent/guardian of youth). Follow the procedures outlined in **Virtual Connect: Engagement Opportunities and Expectations**. These guidelines can be found on the [Maryland 4-H website](#) and in Appendix E of the **Restoring Maryland 4-H Programs Volunteer Guidebook**.

- If you plan to post photos or videos of your activity to social media or a website, be sure all parents/guardians of youth depicted in the images have given permission to do so in the Publicity Release they signed as part of 4-H Online enrollment. Your local 4-H program office can help confirm publicity release consent.

Facilities

Whenever possible, hold the 4-H activity in a location that is available to the public or to invited parties, such as a park, community center, school, fairgrounds, 4-H conference room, etc. For liability and accessibility reasons, holding in-person 4-H activities on private property is **strongly discouraged**.

Outdoor facilities

- Be sure the space is large enough to accommodate the group size and the planned activities. If you are meeting in a public space, be sure to obtain any necessary permit or permission to use it.
- Consider whether cover will be available in inclement weather.
 - If indoor activities are not permitted under the 4-H **Baseline Conditions** for holding an in-person 4-H activity the cover structure must be open-sided, such as a park or fairgrounds pavilion or a gazebo.
 - The cover structure must be large enough to accommodate the entire group while practicing physical distancing (6 feet apart).
- If you need access to power or internet connection to present the activity program or to accommodate virtual participation, consider using battery-powered devices and/or an independent power source.
 - You may be able to use a wi-fi hotspot for internet connection. Avoid using public wi-fi if possible, for data security reasons.
 - A small generator or marine battery may provide needed power. Be sure the generator/battery is operated **ONLY** by an adult, preferably the owner.
- Have a plan for responding to an emergency such as severe weather, natural disaster, lost child, etc. Communicate the plans with parents and add written instructions to your Health & Safety Plan.

Indoor facilities

(When baseline conditions permit)

- Be sure the space is large enough to accommodate the group size and the planned activities. If a public space, be sure to obtain any necessary permit or permission to use it.
- Ensure adequate ventilation and/or air handling equipment is available and operational. Determine the direction of air flow and try to set up the activity space to avoid circulated air blowing directly on participants.
 - Remember that many illnesses, including COVID-19, are transmitted through respiratory droplets. Forced air circulation can help respiratory droplets travel from one person to another over longer distances than in normal conditions.
- Avoid holding activities in facilities with furnishings that cannot be easily disinfected between uses (cloth-covered couches and chairs, drapes, etc.) unless the facility conducts deep cleaning between uses.
- If others will be present at the facility at the same time as a 4-H activity will be held, plan how you will avoid or manage contact with those individuals while entering, using, and exiting the facility.

Transportation & Availability of Parents/Guardians

- Recommend each family to travel to the 4-H activity in their own vehicle (no carpooling). This prevents close, prolonged contact between individuals who do not share a household.
- If carpooling is necessary or allowed, have a parent/guardian of a youth who will ride with another family complete the **Permission to Travel** form and provide it to the activity leader. The Permission to Travel form can be found on the [Maryland 4-H website](#).
 - Youth who will not arrive at activity with their own parent/guardian must not forget to bring their parent/guardian-signed Health Pledge.
- Require a parent/guardian or designated responsible adult to remain on-site but away from the group during the 4-H activity.
 - Policy should apply to all youth under age 16 or any youth not yet legally driving. Youth who are 17-18 years old may be able to drive themselves.
- Designate an area in a nearby parking lot for parent/guardian drivers and others to wait in. If possible, choose an area that has line of sight to the outdoor 4-H activity or to the exit of an indoor activity.
 - Adults will be nearby and can be immediately available if needed (child wants to leave early, doesn't feel well, doesn't follow rules, etc.)
 - May be able to watch outdoor activities from afar
- Encourage drivers to wait in/at their vehicles and remain ready for contact by text or call to mobile phone
 - Remind drivers and non-spectator passengers that they should wear face covering and practice physical distancing if they socialize with others while waiting.

Arrival & Departure

- Use a “carpool line” procedure for arrival and departure.

Arrival Recommendations

1. Have leader posted in/near parking area, ready for participant arrival.
 2. Vehicle pulls up to where leader is standing. Driver does not roll down window until directed. Driver should put on a face covering if not already wearing one.
 3. Driver holds up completed Health Pledge to window so it can be visually inspected by leader. Repeat if more than one pledge is presented.
 4. At leader’s direction, driver rolls down window and drops health pledge form(s) into container (zipper bag, envelope, box, basket, etc.)
 5. Participants exit the vehicle and go to designated area for next arrival steps (instructions, hand hygiene, etc.).
 6. Leader records participant names and information on attendance record, including parent/guardian or driver’s phone number.
 7. Once all check-in actions are complete, driver proceeds to designated waiting area.
- Benefits of carpool line arrival process:
 - Everyone stays in vehicle until they are cleared to enter the activity. If someone is not allowed entry, they do not have contact with others before leaving the area.
 - Contact between leader & driver is mostly conducted through barrier of vehicle window.
 - Collection of documents is contactless.

Departure Recommendations

1. Leader texts or calls drivers to let them know activity has ended and to queue for pickup.
 2. Drives line up at designated pick-up point and wait for participants.
 3. One participant/family at a time, youth are allowed to walk to vehicle.
 4. Once all riders are safely inside vehicle, it departs. Next vehicle pulls up to pick-up spot.
- Benefits of carpool line departure process:
 - Physical distancing/no contact with others as participants go directly from the activity to the vehicle
 - Leader can accurately record departure time and visually verify youth departed with parent/guardian or designated adult.
 - Easy for leader to monitor and record departures because they happen one vehicle/family at a time.
 - Have blank Health Pledge forms available at arrival in case a participant arrives without one
 - Leader can provide a blank pledge form on request but cannot assist parent/guardian or adult in completing it. This includes taking the participant’s temperature.
 - Driver should be directed to move vehicle out of arrival line while completing health pledge, then to re-enter the line once completed.
 - Keep blank Health Pledge forms in a zipper bag or envelope and provide them one-at-a-time as needed.

Physical Distancing

- Use visual physical distancing cues: place tables, chairs, stations, stalls, etc. at least 6 feet apart to help youth judge distance.
- Mark the ground/floor with tape marks or arrows to remind participants where to stand or direction of travel. Use other items* to mark or define space, to add an element of fun, such as:
 - Sidewalk chalk drawings, if outside on a markable surface
 - Hula hoops or milk crates
 - Individualized “yard art” signs
 - Beach towels, mats, or blankets
- Create a mini-obstacle course for youth to go through at arrival or during appropriate parts of the activity. Include touchless obstacles* like weaving through cones, jumping over ropes or pool noodles, etc. This adds an element of fun while moving from one space to another and following directional cues. Encourage team spirit by having one youth at a time go through the course while others cheer them on.
- Ask participants to bring their own camp chairs if seating is needed. They can easily be placed 6 feet apart, on designated spots. This also prevents having to sanitize on-site chairs or benches.
- If working together on a single project, such as constructing a club booth or banner, set up individual task stations at least 6 feet apart. Each participant can work on an element of the final project at their own station. One at a time, they can add their element to the project.
 - Put the project in the middle and the stations around it in a circle to emphasize the team dynamic.
- If meeting outside, use a portable microphone and speaker (if available) so everyone can hear.
 - Avoid passing the microphone unless it is properly sanitized between touches.
 - There are several smartphone apps that can couple a phone with a bluetooth speaker to use as a mini-sound system.

**Remember to sanitize all items before and after use and in-between touches by individuals. Avoid using items that are difficult to clean or disinfect.*

Health & Hygiene

- Give each participant a mini bottle of hand sanitizer upon arrival or ask them to bring their own from home. Encourage frequent use throughout the activity.
- Make sanitizing the last action of the in-person activity. Have participants sanitize* anything they will carry home:
 - Place papers and writing utensils in a large zipper bag and seal it shut
 - Use alcohol-based or cleaning product wipes to wipe down water bottles and other hard-surfaced items.
 - Spray fabric or porous items (camp chairs, backpacks, etc.) with disinfectant spray.
 - Have participants wash their hands after completing sanitization.
- Have several extra disposable masks on hand, to replace participants' own masks if necessary (Someone gets sick, drops mask in the mud, etc.). Spare masks should be individually packaged in zipper bags or product packaging.
- Keep a supply of plastic zipper bags in several sizes on hand to segregate and contain items as necessary (dirty fabric masks, etc.).
- Keep disinfectant wipes in restrooms. Post signs on stall doors and walls reminding users to wipe down handles, etc. before and after they touch them. Place a trash can right next to the door so participants can pull or push open the door using the wipe, then drop it in the can.
- Manage trash – prevent overflowing trash receptacles. Bring your own trash can (foldable or portable) if necessary. Use on-site dumpsters or cans to dispose of collected trash; don't put trash in your vehicle to dispose of at home.

*CDC recommendations for Cleaning & Sanitizing can be found at:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/Reopening_America_Guidance.pdf

Shared Equipment & Materials

- Keep cleaning materials at each location where a common space or shared equipment will be used. Write reminder instructions on how to sanitize the surface or equipment on a card and post it at the location. Keep a small trash receptacle at the station for cleaning waste.
- Have participants bring their own notebooks, pens/pencils, project resources, etc. to avoid sharing or taking items from a common-use container (pencil box, stack of papers, materials bin, etc.)
- Provide or ask participants to bring a cookie sheet or tray to use as a lap desk, especially if they bring their own camp chairs. Trays can be useful while working on tables or counters, too.
 - Trays can contain elements of hands-on projects such as building, crafting, or drawing
 - Each participant can have all needed items on their own tray so they don't have to share or take them from a common-use container
 - If plastic or metal trays are provided, they can be easily sanitized before and after use on-site and washed more thoroughly between activities (in the dishwasher, etc.).
- Avoid using paper handouts unless necessary to the activity/lesson. Instead send electronic copies that can be saved or printed at home.
 - If paper handouts are needed, pre-print and package them in envelopes, folders, page protectors, plastic bags, etc.
 - Place a handout packet at each station where a participant will work on the activity -- don't ask participants to take one from a pile or pass around. Minimize the number of touches as much as possible.
 - Require all youth to take their handouts home with them or throw them in trash before leaving. Unless youth made notes they want to keep, consider having all handouts discarded rather than carried home. You can email electronic copies that can be printed at home if a participant wants their own paper copy
- Use great care when cleaning and sanitizing electronic or powered items, such as computers, robots, electrical wiring, etc. to avoid personal injury from electrocution and/or damage to the equipment.
 - Never attempt to sanitize exposed wires while electricity can flow through them. Always remove the power source before cleaning or sanitizing, by turning the item off and unplugging it from a wall outlet and/or removing batteries.
 - Clean and sanitize devices according to manufacturer instructions, if available. If you don't have instructions for the electronic item, you may find instructions in an internet search. Manuals and instructions for most items can now be found online.
 - Be sure the item is completely dry before re-connecting the power source. The item should not have any standing or remnant liquid or moisture on it.
 - Clean screens gently, using minimal pressure to avoid damage to the liquid crystal display (LCD)

Food & Drinks

Except for personal water bottles brought from home by participants, allowing food or drinks at an in-person 4-H activity is **strongly discouraged** in the current COVID-19 environment. However, if you receive advance approval to have food and/or drinks at your 4-H activity, consider these practices:

- Do not serve food or drinks unless absolutely necessary.
- If food is necessary (such as for a day-long activity):
 - Have participants bring their own food in entirely disposable containers (paper bag, snack baggies, pre-packaged foods, etc.). Utensils should also be disposable.
 - If purchasing food for an activity, ask vendor to prepare “box lunches” that contain all elements of the meal in one container for each individual.
 - If providing food, use pre-packaged meals/snacks and utensils. Do not allow participants to serve themselves from a common source (taking a slice of pizza from a box, taking cookies out of a package, pulling a can from a cooler, etc.)
 - No self-serve or potluck/buffet-style meals.
 - If food is served, servers must wear appropriate food-service PPE including masks and gloves and strictly follow food service sanitation requirements.
 - Hot food is recommended over cold.
- Ensure participants maintain physical distance while eating.
 - Arrange chairs around common tables at least 6 feet apart
 - Use disposable paper placemats to designate where participants should sit at tables.
 - Use outdoor “personal picnics”: have each participant bring a beach towel from home. Place the towels at least 6 feet apart on the ground and have participants stay on their towels while eating.
- **NO SHARING OF FOOD OR DRINKS**
- Manage food waste. Don't allow trash cans to overflow or participants to touch waste.
 - Have participants stay in their seats after eating/drinking. A leader brings a trash can around the room to collect waste. Another leader or older youth can follow with hand sanitizer.

Technology Access or Ability Challenges

The primary method of communication in the modern world is electronic via the internet. The pandemic quarantine environment has made online connection more critical than ever. However, some 4-H volunteers and families may not have access to technology or the skill or ability to access and/or use online resources.

4-H Volunteers

Before requesting to hold an in-person 4-H activity, volunteers are required to complete an online training and certification called **Returning to 4-H In-Person Programming**. After they have completed the training, volunteers must request approval for an in-person 4-H activity using an online process. They must also complete a post-activity report of an approved 4-H activity within 48 hours of the activity's end.

If a 4-H volunteer leader is not able to access or use online resources, they should first consider if a family member, friend, or fellow volunteer can help them perform the necessary online functions. If family or friends cannot assist, the volunteer should contact the local 4-H Educator for assistance.

Some ways a 4-H volunteer may work with others to complete required online actions are:

- If the volunteer can access the internet using a tablet or smartphone, they may be able to complete some required actions using that device.
 - Required volunteer training involves watching a pre-recorded video, which should be viewable on a smartphone or tablet. The volunteer should also be able to complete the post-video questionnaire and certification using a smart device.
 - The Request to Hold an In-Person 4-H Activity involves an online form and requires upload of 2 documents. The volunteer may or may not be able to complete the request using a smart device.
 - Post-Activity reporting involves an online form and requires upload of one or more documents. The volunteer may or may not be able to complete the request using a smart device.
- If the volunteer has no access to online technology, they can use a “helper” to complete the online requirements.
 - Ask a family member, co-volunteer, or friend to print necessary documents and mail or deliver them.
 - The volunteer completes the required documents by handwriting and returns them to the helper.
 - The helper uses the handwritten documents to complete the online requirements on behalf of the volunteer. Documents that must be uploaded can be scanned and uploaded in handwritten form, or the helper can use the handwritten documents as a draft and type the final documents that will be uploaded.
 - All handwritten documents should be saved after they have been used, to show the volunteer have the helper permission to act on their behalf.

- The volunteer and helper can use a “phone-a-friend” process to complete online requests, reports, and required documents.
 - The helper and volunteer connect by phone while the helper is logged on to the computer.
 - The helper reads the question to the volunteer and types the volunteer's response into the form or document.
 - This process works very well between co-leaders who need to collaborate on plans or requests to hold an in-person 4-H activity! The leader who has internet access can fill out the forms while both leaders discuss how they will handle situations and meet requirements for their activity.
- Contact your local 4-H program office or 4-H Educator. They may be able to provide other options if the ones listed here are not feasible.

4-H Families

4-H families may also be impacted by access to or ability to use online resources. Most importantly, they may not be able to receive important communications about 4-H activities via email or other electronic means. They may also have a hard time joining in virtual or distanced 4-H activities. Even if a family does have access to online communications and connections, they may not have access to equipment to perform certain functions, such as printers, scanners, etc.

- If you use email as your primary means of communication with your 4-H activity or group, be sure all families can access your messages. Supplement your communications in other ways, such as
 - Informational posts to private social media groups (such as a club's private Facebook group page)
 - Group text applications, such as Remind, GroupMe, etc.
 - Phone calls (one-on-one or conference calls)
 - “Snail mail” as timely and appropriate
- If a 4-H family doesn't have a printer but needs a printed form or document:
 - Print and mail forms, documents, or other materials to the family. You might be able to use contactless delivery such as leaving printed materials outside their door, etc.
 - Unless a form must be physically printed, signed, and turned in (like the Health Pledge) consider if you can accomplish what you need to do using an online form, electronic signature program, etc.
- If a 4-H family needs to scan a document but they don't have a scanner:
 - They may be able to submit a clear photo of the completed document. If a photo file (jpeg, png, bmp, etc.) is not acceptable, it can be converted to PDF, which is a universal format.
 - If the family doesn't know how to convert a photo to PDF, maybe a leader or a fellow 4-H family can help!
 - There are several smartphone apps that enable phones or tablets to use the device camera to scan a document and save it to the device. Apple iPhone users can find scan capability in the iPhone's “Notes” app. Most apps offer the capability to save the file in PDF format.